105 formerly they practiced empollamiento
[846] /5 cont./ /^breeding, hatching"/
[771] (couvade); they have a purely exorcistic, animistic system,
[325] and not a sacerdotal or theistic one; they make metal objects;
[505] they travel in canoes..., they grow and spin cotton and make
[248] complicated weavings with this fiber...; they press yucca with
[283] a basketwork press of characteristic design; they make numerous
[286] objects of a typical and fine basketwork."
[285]

Chapter II

The Land Where the Pemón Indians Live

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10. The general area. 11. The main nucleus of the Gran Sabana. 12. Its location. 13. Climate. 14. Area. 15. Orography. 16. Hydrography. 17. The name Gran Sabana. 18. The name Alto /Upper/ Caroní. 19. The name Serranía de Guayana /Guiana Ridge/. 20. The wealth of this region. 21. The beauties of the same. 22. Caroní and Roroima. 23. Means of communication.

131 10. The tribes of the Pemón language live in the most
101 central part of Guiana in the region of Venezuela, which, /6/ orographically we may call Roroima Mountain (N., S., and W. of same) and hydrographically, Caroní River.

I believe it necessary to repeat that the borders of Indians, like those of birds, are not those designated by international treaties; and thus the Pemón Indians go beyond the borders of Venezuela and also extend into the Brazilian campos of the Branco River and into the forests of British Guiana.

11. There are a group of Pemón who live in Kamarata and Urimán (savannas); a few less live in the forests of the Tiriká, the Caroní, and the Paragua; but the main nucleus of this tribe is located on the Gran Sabana, hence we must

/49 cont./

789 To this category belong among the Pemón Indians the practice
[754] of injuring an enemy by charming his tracks; carrying water in
513 the mouth when planting cane and invoking the poppy so that
224 sleep will come to children; hunters making remedies with
252 leaves similar to the ears of some animal or other so that the
755 animal may come out to meet them; women pouring honey
787 into cuts on their jaws so that the chewed kachirí may turn out
787 sweet for them; believing that eating eggs will bring out boils;
believing that tripping over a stone on the path is a presage
that we shall meet a traveler who is coming in the opposite
direction; interpreting dreams always through similarities, e.g.
moriche seeds guáimaro, red kachirí for blood, the piache's
song for sickness; and a thousand more which we shall not list
for the sake of brevity. About this same matter, Cecil Dampier
wrote: "The savage does not pray to God to send him sun or
rain: he dances a dance to the sun or he croaks like a frog...,
following an association of ideas."

Y. A. Bouyssonie observed that "red ocher makes one think of blood, the condition of life, and therefore is considered to be a sort of medium for conjuring death and for facilitating posthumous existence."

789 The same can be said of the use of annatto or achiote among these Indians against the oradán, maurí, and amariauk.

108. The second principle gives rise to the magical practices which are called contagious and also sympathetic. To
855 this type belong, among the Pemón Indians, the group of prac-
846 tices related to the couvade and the asarakpué, that is, having
789 to do with the birth of children and the death of our relatives. The practices and abstentions with reference to the couvade, which begin from the time of the pairing of the progenitors and continue in minuendo until the children are two or three years old, affect not only the father -- as is generally said in ethnographic treatises, but also the mother, and it is based on the belief that tiredness, sickness, /50/ malevolent influences, etc., of either of the progenitors affect -- and in a higher

789/50 cont./
855 degree than in the progenitors themselves -- tender young
846 children unless they are counteracted by the force of the charms for each case or matter.

789 The practices and abstentions related to the death of rela-
753 tives are based similarly on the supposition that the decomposi-
761 tion of the body of the dead causes infections and stench in
783 all the relatives, producing in them sores, eruptions, decomposition, and similar things; for this reason they must abstain from contact with all others in order not to contaminate them, cannot prepare meals for them, etc.

489 In summation of the foregoing we can transcribe these words from the Enciclopedia Espasa: "Savage and barbarian societies, and in general always those that are ignorant of the causes of physical or psychic phenomena, man has attempted to oppose the nefarious influence of the spirits which he supposes surround him by means of a series of magic rites -- mimetic and oral...." To these words we must add that, as can be observed from some of the examples cited above, not only is the attempt made to counteract the evil influences of the spirits proper, but also other corporal, but mysterious, beings.

Chapter XIII

Do the Indians Practice Divination?

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109. The innate curiosity of all men. 110. Among the Indians, neither more nor less. 111. Invocation of the dead. 112. Omens. 113. The interpretation of dreams. 114. Casuality and causality. 115. The "just in case."

109. The innate curiosity of men, which is said to be the beginning of all knowledge, recognizes no barriers; and sometimes with leaden feet, with well thought out arguments and

/53 cont./

787 coincidences. But even these latter, being mindful of "just in case" and "precaution is not cowardice," in practice act as if they were believers. Especially concerning dreams, which sometimes are so vivid and impressive /54/ all stick to tradition and it can be said of them what someone said of simple people in general: "It doesn't matter to them what they see by day and they are so preoccupied with what passes through their heads during sleep at night."

Chapter XIV

What Is This about Couvade and Asarakpué?

116. The word and the custom. 117. False observations. 118. The four degrees of the couvade. 119. The custom is general. 120. Proposed explanations. 121. What the Pemón say about this custom of theirs. 122. The practice of asarakpué.

846 116. This exotic (French) word couvade or covada has come into our language and now all ethnologists commonly use it; other words invented to replace it, such as empollamiento /"incubation"/, simply do not fit. Foreign in its origin, this word speaks to us of a custom strange and even ridiculous when studied only superficially.

The couvade consists of the special cares which a father and a mother must take to assure good procreation (eugenics) and development of their infant children. As the Pemón say: Mure yun-pe, mure dam-pe enan dau, esenman naua ("When one is the father or mother of a child, one must be careful in the following things"). And to this is added a long and detailed list of precautions.

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846 117. From this simple definition it can be deduced that the ethnologists who attribute these precautions to the father alone are in error. At least among the Pemón and other related tribes, it seems positively certain to me that the precautions are common to both parents. Could it be that, since these precautions in mothers do not attract attention because they are a common thing, the writers noticed only the males?

But in addition to paying attention only to the males, they have even gone to the extreme of inverting these terms, writing, for example: "The covada consists in the father, a little before the child is born, getting into bed, going on a diet, resting, and doing everything that a parturient woman does, and he is attended by women pretending that he has given birth. By contrast, the woman would get up after the birth and dedicate herself to her usual domestic chores."

Wise ethnologists, whose authority we cannot question /55/ state, regarding certain tribes, that the men went so far in their precautions and anxieties to avoid every danger to the newborn and for other reasons which we shall later see, as to stay in bed as if they really had given birth. But in none of these have I read up to the present time that, inversely, the woman should not stay in bed at least a while nor not take other precautions.

000 This conclusion is perhaps also an exaggeration to which they have resorted in their eagerness to contrast the affectations of city women with the natural state observed in country women, especially native ones. And thus, for example, Estrabón says, when talking about the Cantabrian women of Spain: "They were, these women, very tough, and it happened that when, during their work, they found themselves in labor, they went away for a while and then later, having washed and wrapped up the newborn, they returned to work."

842 As for the Pemón, although they are brave in giving birth and even in some cases refuse any help at all, and although, when surprised during a trip by childbirth, they continue the

/56 cont./

846 829 121. On top of these and other theories, the Pemón Indians, who practice the couvade, themselves have explained to me the reason and extent. Therefore, as far as they are concerned, there is no doubt that the reason for this is the following. They say that: /five plates appear here/ /57/ a) "every alteration of the health of the father or of the mother, any work which might lead to tiredness, any fatigue or disturbance of the progenitors, etc., has repercussions on the newborn, who are a part of them." They believe, thus, in sympathetic influence, to which they suppose children to be extremely sensitive and which has repercussions on the child, as a part of a whole, from the parents.

Men as scientific as Alexis Carrel believe that there is some truth in this and thus there is an explanation of certain phenomena of telepathy, prescience, etc.

846 776 b) The Pemón add to this another reason and this is that, according to them, the potorí or piá, each of them the engenderer of a definite species of animal and plant, on being cut down or destroyed, take vengeance on human sprouts or offspring. Another thing is that the mauarí and other spirits are bothered by certain actions of men, such as, for example, by the rolling of stones down hills, and then they also take vengeance on their little children, who are easier prey for their anger and their evil influences. This second cause is, thus, belief in the harmful influence of invisible spirits and of the progenitors and, for this reason, defenders of living beings, whoever they may be /sic/.

843 784 It will suffice to transcribe a few precautions, among the very many taken down from their dictation, so that the two principles which have been stated may be quite clear:

1. A woman who is enceinte must not eat cassava which has been returned to the house from which it came, so that, when she gives birth the child may not turn back to the breast.

/57 cont./

784 2. Pubescent girls must not eat twin fruits, so that they
845 may not conceive twins.

3. The parents of a newborn child must not eat paují
●846 meat, because it will make the child turn yellow. Let it
784 be remembered that the paují has a yellow face, very striking in contrast to the extreme blackness of its frizzled crest.

4. The parents of a newborn child must not walk barefoot over rocky or hot sandy places, lest the child should suffer.

5. They must not carry heavy loads either, because the child's neck will become bent and he will suffer from fatigue.

6. They must abstain from sexual relations, since these will produce fever and vomiting in the children.

7. If the father of the newborn should noisily knock down large rocks from high hills, the child will suffer from fright and horrors and will tremble during its sleep.

8. If the father of the newborn cuts certain vines, /58/ his child's navel will become infected or will swell up, depending on whether those vines rot or swell up.

789 The Pemón are not, at the present time, exaggerated in
846 the practice of these observances; they observe them for only a few days and this because of the preachings of their fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law. Then, since they know the charms for each case and each thing to counteract evil influences, they return to ordinary life.

765 122. Another custom, the twin of the couvade and based
753 on the same principle of sympathy or sympathetic influence, is the asarakpué, or observances which must be followed by the relatives of the dead. This is not only observing mourning or showing sadness; they consider themselves infected by the rotting of the corpse of the dead relative and as foci of infection for all they touch.

/89 cont./

the basins of the Caroní and the Paragua, did not turn up any native settlement of more than 100 individuals, with 99 per cent being of only two or three houses with less than 30 individuals.

194. We believe that this state was really that of the majority of the native tribes upon the arrival of the Spanish discoverers and colonizers. And so Columbus says when speaking of Cuba that "we found innumerable peoples and small villages /poblaciones/, but without any government at all." With an author of the history of Cuba, Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, we believe that here as well as there: "No authentic proof can serve us as a basis to support the fact that (Cuba) was divided into extensive provinces, ruled by chiefs or little kings. The maps that have been drawn showing such provinces or districts under caciques are the product of the fantasy of their authors alone."

And the fact is that, aside from the danger of war or when avoiding other evils, in extensive territories with sparse population and easy means of livelihood within the bounds of frugality, grouping in order to provide themselves with greater well-being and more ease takes place slowly by an almost imperceptible process of integration. This is the same phenomenon which we are groping for in the field of international affairs: groupings in war and separation in time of peace, without as yet arriving, after so many centuries of history, at the international society which must come.

195. For those who are up-to-date on the matters which are usually dealt with in ethnology when discoursing upon the organization of primitive peoples, I should add that among the Pemón Indians there is not the remotest trace of totemism; they practice equally both endogamy and exogamy; and neither does there exist any trace of matriarchy, despite the fact that the Caribe Indians in general have been classified as belonging to that cultural cycle and as solely exogamous. The couvade, which it has been wished to interpret as proof of matriarchy, through the little which we have said about it when talking about magic, will be seen to be /90/ lacking in probatory value since it affects equally both progenitors.